# Utah Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT SALT LAKE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT February 26, 2008

The attached report contains the results of the first two phases (Self-Assessment Process and On-Site Validation Visit) of the Utah Special Education Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS). This Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process is conducted by the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) Special Education Services (SES), as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B. The process is designed to focus resources on improving results for students with disabilities through enhanced partnerships between charter school and district programs, USOE-SES, the Utah Personnel Development Center, parents, and advocates.

The first phase of this process included the development of a Program Improvement Plan. The second phase, On-Site Validation, conducted in Salt Lake City School District on January 16-17, 2008, included student record reviews, interviews with school administrators, teachers, and parents. Parent surveys were also mailed to a small sample of parents.

This report contains a more complete description of the process utilized to collect data and to determine strengths, areas out of compliance with the requirements of IDEA, and recommendations for improvement in each of the core IDEA areas.

## **Areas of Strength**

The validation team found the following:

### **General Supervision**

- Participation of all required IEP team members, including parents, for eligibility determination, classification, IEP development, and placement.
- Comprehensive evaluations, using a variety of instruments and formal and information data sources.
- Consideration of parental input and input from others having knowledge and expertise by the school members of the IEP team.
- At the school-age level, implementation of pre-referral interventions prior to referral for a special education evaluation.
- A clear direction of how information and training is provided by the Special Education Department's master comprehensive system of personnel development (CSPD) plan.
- Information regarding implementation of IDEA received and updated regularly for special education teachers, related service providers, school administrators regularly.
- A high quality of mentoring and induction support for new special education teachers and related service providers.
- Accessibility of district-level special education staff (district administrators, consultants, and itinerant staff) to schools.
- The district serves a wide-range of students coming from a breadth of socioeconomic, cultural, and second language backgrounds.
- Special education staff participate in all professional development at the school and district level to learn instructional strategies to teach students from diverse backgrounds.
- The district's schools are each uniquely designed to reflect the surrounding neighborhood and community. Schools are accessible for students with disabilities and designated space for special education programs has been incorporated into new schools.
- Special education and related services are provided to students at their neighborhood schools or close to their neighborhood schools when a special class placement is needed. Each of the four quadrants in the district provides a full range of program options.
- The Special Education Improvement Council (SPEDIC) also served as a source of input. This is a
  district level council comprised of representatives from each of the district's four quadrants and
  high schools. SPEDIC made recommendations for the Self-Assessment report.
- Effectiveness of schools' student services committees in reviewing students at risk, reviewing implementation of pre-referral interventions, and making appropriate referrals for special education evaluations.
- Increased number of special education students accessing the general curriculum for the majority of the school day.

- Inclusion of students with severe disabilities in school-wide and grade level activities.
- Increased level of proficiency of special education students on CRTs in language arts at the elementary level.
- Special education files contained evidence of corrections of noncompliance identified during the self-assessment process.
- The majority of the special education teachers are highly qualified for their assignments. The Salt Lake City School District is working with those who are not highly qualified and assignments are adjusted as needed.
- Professional development is provided to special education teachers in conjunction with general education teachers. The professional development is determined by the SLC SD Curriculum Department with a strong focus on the Utah core curriculum.
- SLC SD is moving towards a co-teaching model to provide special education services in secondary schools.
- The SLC SD Special Education Department collaborates with the Equity Department during
  weekly district meetings during which they discuss how instructional services can be improved as
  a way of decreasing over-identification of students with disabilities. Teachers provide explicit
  language instruction to struggling students before referring to special education.
- Professional development is provided to all special education staff, include paraprofessionals and bus drivers
- Special education consultants, from the SLC SD, work with their assigned schools to provide support, information, and help with problem solving. During interviews, school personnel described them as responsive and expressed appreciation for their help.
- SLC SD participates in the Utah Behavior Initiative (UBI) with two UBI schools and three baseline schools currently implementing the positive behavior support model. Consideration of implementing the UBI model in all elementary schools is being considered.
- There is a strong focus on math instruction and tier 2 interventions district-wide. This follows a multi-year focus on literacy.
- Each school has a Student Services Committee (SSC) which reviews student data and provides
  recommendations for additional instructional support for struggling students, as well as makes
  recommendations for referrals. The At-Risk Intervention document has been utilized by this
  committee to document data, intervention results, and helps develop a hypothesis regarding the
  student's primary educational difficulty.
- Child find processes are in place, following USBE Special Education Rules and SLC SD Policies and Procedures, addresses students from 0-21, coordination with Early Intervention, and students in charter schools, private schools, and residing in homeless shelters, as well as students advancing from grade to grade.
- Special education staff, including paraprofessionals, receive annual training on confidentiality procedures with follow up training provided during quadrant meetings.
- U-PASS proficiency for students with disabilities increased in math and language arts in 2007.
   CRT trend lines show an annual increase in proficiency each year since 2003.
- With district support, schools review U-PASS data and use the information to determine targets
  for improvement. Data is reviewed by subgroup, grade, and at the student level, which provides
  the schools with an opportunity to identify students who are consistently low and issues affecting
  student performance.
- Professional development activities for special education programs are determined by the Special Education Director with input from consultants and the Special Education Improvement Council, and are planned annually during the summer for the following school year. Teachers and paraprofessionals are provided with a calendar of available professional development activities at the beginning of each school year, allowing them to plan. Substitutes are provided for some activities.
- Paraprofessionals are actively supervised by special education personnel.
- Special education files contained records of access.
- All schools also have a Community Council to allow for parent input, to provide additional support
  to teachers and students and make improvement decisions. Other schools have been
  redesigned to allow space for community learning centers, which have an emphasis on parent
  involvement.
- All students, including students with severe disabilities, are provided an opportunity to participate in general education physical education activities.

- Files were organized and staff were knowledgeable about file contents.
- Some schools offer after-school peer tutoring programs which are available to all students attending those schools. Additionally, several schools have peer tutoring programs.
- Pre-referral and referral forms were present in all special education files. Pre-referral forms
  included data from interventions. General education teachers receive ongoing professional
  development on the referral process and, when interviewed, could accurately describe the
  process and stated that it was working in a timely and efficient manner.
- One high school reported having a Freshman Intervention, which focuses on including 9<sup>th</sup> graders in school activities.
- During interviews, school staff also reported appreciation for the responsiveness of the district special education director.
- Initial evaluations are completed within 45 school days of receipt of parent consent.
- Review of existing data documented during the reevaluation process.
- Eligibility determinations are current and included in special education files. Evaluations included a variety of assessments, both formal and informal, and were sufficiently comprehensive to address all areas of educational need.
- Some evaluations included psychological reports that were easy to understand and comprehensive.
- The SLC SD is developing procures for determining SLD eligibility using an RTI process.
- Mentoring for teachers in their first three years of teaching in SLC SD is coordinated between the Salt Lake City SD Special Education Mentor Coordinator and General Education mentoring. Trainings are provided together and the Special Education Teacher mentor Coordinator provides coaching as well as instructional support and special education specific support. Related service providers also participate in mentoring. Mentoring is provided to all teachers new to SLC SD, regardless of previous experience, to provide them with district specific information and philosophies. Mentees are surveyed annually for satisfaction rates, results are reported annually to the SLC School Board.

### Parent Involvement

- Interpreters are used during IEP meetings for families whose primary language is other than English.
- IEP forms, Procedural Safeguards, and IEP summary documents are translated into the parent's native language for families whose primary language is other than English.
- Procedural safeguards are received by parents at least annually.
- Parent viewpoints are heard when making suggestions for present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) statements and IEP goals, eligibility for special education, and placement options.
- Concerns and input from parents are heard by school and district-level staff.
- The district works hard to facilitate consensus during meetings.
- Parents understand how to pursue a resolution for their concerns.
- Parental involvement is encouraged by schools and teachers in the classrooms.
- A comprehensive parent interview is conducted for English Language Learner (ELL) referrals, which gathers important information for the evaluation process.
- School and district-level special education staff are willing to incorporate suggestions of parents regarding program improvements.
- Parents receive copies of IEPs and eligibility determination forms, as documented in special education files.
- Parents receive written prior notice of proposed or refused activities, as documented in special education files.
- Consent from parents is obtained prior to evaluation and initial placement in special education.
- Some schools provide transportation to enable parents to attend IEP meetings.
- Parents are involved in school community councils.
- Parent participation and attendance is high for meetings. Meetings are rescheduled to ensure parent attendance.
- Parents reported school staff are generally helpful, collaborative, and willing to work with students with disabilities. They discussed school specific programs involving mentoring, art, and community building as positive aspects for their students with disabilities.

- Interpreters, when attending meetings, document their participation.
- Parents reported receiving Procedural Safeguards. Special education staff, when interviewed, were able to describe components of the Procedural Safeguards.
- Parents, during the parent focus group, described ways that the evaluation and IEP team listened
  to and considered their input, as well as how valuable they thought it was to bring others with
  input with them to the meeting.
- IEP meetings are scheduled at mutually agreeable times, as described in parent focus groups and documented in special education files.
- Parents felt that the district office provided additional support for parents while working through concerns they had for their students.
- All parents, during the parent focus group, felt that their student with disabilities was making progress towards IEP goals. During the IEP, the team determines how progress will be measured and when it will be reported to parents.
- Parents reported that the schools facilitate opportunities for them to provide input about their student's education other than at IEP meetings. Parents discussed receiving proactive calls from the school or daily communication regarding their student.
- Parents also reported that their schools encourage their involvement as a means of improving services and results for their student with disabilities.

### Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment

- Comprehensive training for special education teachers on administration and interpretation of the Woodcock-Johnson III.
- Inclusion models (co-teaching, push-in, peer buddy, and power hour models) are being used for to provide options for students with disabilities to access the general curriculum.
- Special education teachers are trained with general education teachers in effective instruction strategies and differentiation of instruction.
- Relevant and current information regarding the students' present levels of functioning in Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFPs) statements.
- Measurable annual goals with clear criteria and related to the PLAAFPs are included in IEPs in elementary schools.
- SLC SD developed an instruction manual for teachers who administer CRTs. The manual includes detailed information on testing instructions and considerations for students with disabilities.
- The Special Education Department maintains a database of students with disabilities who are assessed using the Utah Alternate Assessment (UAA). This information is used to monitor percentages of students talking the UAA rather than CRTs.
- Disciplinary information on students with disabilities is maintained by school staff. Quarterly
  reports are provided to the Special Education Director for review. Interim alternative educational
  settings (IAES) are available and in place to address the needs of students with disabilities are
  removed from their regular placements.
- Extended school year (ESY) training is provided to special education teachers through quadrant
  meetings. Teachers are prompted to collect data on IEP goals prior to scheduled school breaks.
  The ESY program is provided in a variety of methods, determined by the IEP team, and include
  options such as parent consultation, parent training, home learning packets with and without
  teacher support, related services, and school based services.
- All required IEP team members generally documented as attending meetings.
- Data were documented on student progress by teachers and paraprofessionals at several schools.
- When students were participating in the UAA, IEP included short term objectives/benchmarks.
- School staff are aware of need for complete IEP teams and work diligently to ensure that it
  occurs.
- Behavior goals are included in IEPs, when appropriate, and special factors accurately reflect those needs.
- A continuum of placement options is available district-wide with a renewed focus on inclusionary practices. Additional focus on the LRE continuum for preschool is underway. Placement decisions are made by the IEP team and begin as soon as possible following development of the IEP.

- SLC SD reported graduation and drop out data reflect admirable results for students with disabilities.
- Students, during student focus groups, described the progress they have made as a result of their special education services. Students generally knew what an IEP was and were invited to attend and participate in the meetings.
- Students with disabilities are provided multiple opportunities to participate in school activities. Supports are provided, as determined needed by the IEP team.
- A strong correlation was observed between IEP goals and special education services provided during classroom observations.
- IEPs are current and included in special education files. IEP services begin as soon as possible
  after initial placement.
- District assessments in elementary schools are included in the IEP assessment addendum.
   Assessment accommodations are included in the IEP services page.
- Emergency interventions, when used, are documented and information provided to parents and special education director within 24 hours.
- Evidence of progress on including assessment accommodations in the IEP was documented.
- Specific special education services were documented on IEPs. Again, IEPs included evidence of current corrections.
- The IEP team is considering the span of the IEP when determining needed services and assessment accommodations.
- Most special education teachers in Salt Lake City School District have been involved in professional development for the Woodcock Johnson III and USBE Special Education Rules.
- Progress monitoring data reviewed by grade level; program improvement plans adjusted according to data results. Due to 6<sup>th</sup> grade data (see PIP), changes in curriculum focus are being discussed.
- During classroom observations, the following were observed: posted classroom rules and daily schedules, ongoing data collection on progress towards goals, co-teaching, small group instruction, precision commands, verbal prompts, and positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior.

### **Transitions**

- Part C to Part B:
  - Parent satisfaction with initial district contact by preschool coordinator and the gathering of appropriate information about their child's needs.
  - Comprehensive evaluation process that considers all areas of need and Part B information.
  - Parent satisfaction with transition IEP meetings from Part C services to Part B services.
  - District efforts to provide a range of preschool special education service options including neighborhood school preschool programs, integrated preschool programs, special class preschool programs, and Head Start.
  - District efforts to respond to increased number of children with autism and provide appropriate educational services.
  - The SLC SD is actively seeking to provide transition meetings by conducting them in homes, as needed.
  - Documentation of district involvement in the transition process in included in special education files.
  - Utah Preschool Outcomes (UPOD) data are included in preschool files.
  - Preschool transition timeline (IEPs implemented by student's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday) was met this year.
  - It was reported during the parent focus group, that the preschool experience has been beneficial for students with disabilities.
- School to Post-School:
  - Detailed evaluations by school psychologists for students leaving the public school system to obtain services from adult agencies.
  - Knowledgeable high school transition team (high school consultant, school psychologists, transition coordinator) about transition services available for students with disabilities.

- Vocational skill training and supported job-based training provided to referred high school students and post-high students at Columbus Community Center.
- The commitment of the Special Education Department to explore and develop transition program options to meet the needs of all students with disabilities.
- Transition documents are developed by the high school team to facilitate the transition process.
- Transition plans are implemented by the student's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, as documented in special education files and parent reports.
- Consent to invite agency representatives was included in special education files.
- Transition plans include independent living goals, where appropriate.
- Post-school program has been expanded to include college campus experiences, including career technology education (CTE) courses.
- High school special education consultant reported that transition portfolios are developed for students prior to exiting.
- IEP goals were written that reasonably enable a student to reach his/her postsecondary goals.
- Highland HS reports providing assistance with scheduling interviews with disability resource centers and offer UTA training options.
- Some special education files included documentation of invitations to agency fairs.
- School psychologists provide a complete psychological report with current data for exiting students with disabilities to access adult agencies.

## Disproportionality

- Comprehensive referral and evaluation guidelines process for English Language Learner (ELL) students.
- Bi-lingual psychologists and speech language pathologists trained in evaluations of ELL students.
- Parent interview form gathers relevant information regarding the student's background and previous school experiences.
- Teachers and related service providers trained in understanding cultural differences through REACH and are ESL-endorsed.
- Race/ethnicity and primary home language documented in most files.
- Parents whose primary home language is other than English receive a translated summary of their student's IEP.
- Interpreters and forms translated into other languages are used, when needed.

# Areas of Systemic Noncompliance\*

- Evaluation and Eligibility: Evaluation procedures not followed (generally for reevaluations):
   Specific Learning Disability relevant behavior during observation not documented.
- Timelines: Exceeded for reevaluations, placement and IEP review.
- Notice of Meetings for eligibility determinations not documented.
- School to Post-Transition: Transition plans did not include a course of study; Post secondary goals for education/ training and employment not documented; Age appropriate transition assessments not documented; Age of Majority form not completed by student's 17<sup>th</sup> birthday.

<sup>\*</sup>These areas represent items where the visiting team could not locate appropriate documentation of requirements of IDEA 2004 and Utah State Special Education Rules in student records or other data sources.